

Course Syllabus

JOU 4308: Magazine & Feature Writing

Section: 3741

Term: Fall 2018

Class Number: 17883. 5:10 to 8:10 p.m. Wednesdays

Room: Weimer Hall, Room 2050

Instructor: David Schlenker

Contact: dschlenker@ufl.edu, 352-274-0261

Course Description & Objectives

This is a challenging class that will focus on the craft of compelling, long-form journalism. Feature writing involves more reporting, time and personality than news reporting, thus students will learn essential components of writing effective and engaging stories. There will be a strong emphasis on structure, sourcing, reading, story ideas, critical analysis, narrative and voice.

Communication: We are in the communications business. Stay in touch. If you have conflicts or issues that may affect your class work, talk to me or send me an email. We will use Canvas for email communication and grading.

Required Reading

There is no textbook, but there will be required readings each week. Reading and analysis will be a critical part of this class, as well as part of your grade. Also, make a habit of reading newspapers and magazines. You will be asked to bring published works you feel are strong and worthy of discussion.

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory. Each student will be permitted one unexcused absence during the semester; each unexcused absence beyond that will result in a deduction of 5 points from your final grade. Absences for illness (with doctor's note), family emergencies or other urgent situations may be excused, at my discretion. When possible, talk to me prior to attendance conflicts.

Class will start promptly at 5:10 p.m.

Cell Phones & Laptops

Please turn the sound off on your phone. We'll have a short break in the middle of class. Some days will require in-class assignments, so keep laptops handy.

Late Assignments

Writing assignments are due at the start of class. Deadlines are critical in this business; contact sources early. Late assignments will incur significant point deductions, unless otherwise cleared in advance.

Submission Guidelines

Assignments should be submitted in print (hard copy) and emailed in a Word attachment to dschlenker@ufl.edu. Use double-spaced 12-point font and include your name, the assignment title and a suggested headline.

Stories will need at least four human sources attributed in the body of the story, as well as their names and contact information at the bottom of the story. I will be randomly calling your sources to check for accuracy. Additional guidelines will be provided in class as needed.

Grading

There will be no midterm or final exam. You will be graded on 500 points accumulated throughout the semester. Rubrics will be used for the three primary writing assignments.

Profile first draft: 40 points

Profile final draft: 60 points

Trend story first draft: 40 points

Trend story final draft: 60 points

Editor-generated story first draft: 65 points

Editor-generated story final draft: 85 points

Class participation: 50 points

In-class assignments: 100 points

A: 450-500

B+: 435-449

B: 400-434

C+: 385-399

C: 350-384

D+: 335-349

D: 330-334

F: 299 and below

Deductions

Note: We will use AP Style for all assignments.

Other note: No Oxford commas in this class. Here, there is no comma before the conjunction in a series.

- 2 points for punctuation, grammar and AP Style errors
- 5 for misused words
- 20 points for fact errors (name spellings, proper noun spellings, numerical errors)
- 500 for plagiarism (automatic fail)

I advise spending lots of time proofing. Read your stories out loud to yourself and have others (particularly students who know AP Style) proof, as well. Careless

errors are costly in this class. Accuracy and clean writing are critical, as errors in print destroy a writer's credibility.

Extra credit

I will add **5 points** to your overall grade on any assignment published in credible publications (newspapers and magazines). Credit for publication on reputable websites may count as extra credit, but it will be at my discretion.

Swing for the fences. You'll earn a **15-point bonus** on any assignment published in a national magazine or website — or with proof of planned publication, if publication date is beyond the end of the semester.

Course Schedule

Schedule is subject to change.

Week 1

Aug. 22 – Introduction and course overview. Syllabus review, with discussion of three writing assignments. Story structure review: Ledes, anecdotes and nut graphs. Weekly reading assigned.

In-class assignment: Interview a classmate and write a 250-word(ish) profile using a lede/nut graph structure.

Week 2

Aug. 29 – Discussion: Reporting, interview techniques and observation. Reading discussion with story dissection. Discuss profile pitches (roundtable). Profile pitches due next week with proposed lede/anecdote/nut suggestion.

Week 3

Sept. 5 – Profile pitches due, discussed. Profiles assigned; first draft due Sept. 19, final Sept. 26. Story dissection on weekly reading. Discussion: Interviews, sourcing, research, quotes, reporting, flow, rhythm, and endings.

Week 4

Sept. 12 – Story dissection on weekly reading. Come up with five trend ideas in class. Map them out. Reminder: Profile first draft due Sept. 19. Discussion of trend stories.

Week 5

Sept. 19 – Guest speaker. Profile first draft due, discussed. Questions on progress. Story dissection on weekly reading. Reminder: Profile final drafts are due Sept. 26.

Week 6

Sept. 26 –Profile first drafts returned, discussed. Final drafts due Oct. 3. Podcast discussion and listening assignment. Story dissection on weekly reading. Idea roundtable for trend stories.

Week 7

Oct. 3 – Final profile due. Podcast discussed. Trend first draft assigned, due Oct. 17., final due Oct. 31. Story dissection on weekly reading. Bring favorite works from recent newspapers and/or magazines.

Week 8

Oct. 10 – Individual conferences on progress, writing and instructor questions. Students will be assigned 20-minute blocks. Reminder: Trend first drafts due Oct. 17.

Week 9

Oct. 17 – Trend first drafts due. Guest speaker. Story dissection on weekly reading. In-class writing assignment. Bring favorite works from recent newspapers and/or magazines.

Week 10

Oct. 24 – Trend first drafts returned, discussed. Story dissection on weekly reading. In-class writing assignment. Bring favorite works from recent newspapers and/or magazines.

Week 11

Oct. 31 – Final trend stories due. Discussion: Editor-generated features: Making Crappy Assignments Great. Story dissection on weekly reading. Finding sources for editor-assigned features. Interviewing. Editor-assigned feature assigned; first draft due Nov. 14.

Week 12

Nov. 7 – Trend stories returned and discussed. Critiques. Story dissection on weekly reading. In-class writing assignment. Bring favorite works from recent newspapers and/or magazines.

Week 13

Nov. 14 – (Last class before winter break). First draft due, discussed. Story dissection on weekly reading. Bring favorite works from recent newspapers and/or magazines.

Week 14

Nov. 28 – Guest speaker. Drafts returned, discussed. Story dissection on weekly reading. In-class assignment.

Week 15

Dec. 5 – Final drafts due. Course review.

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities requesting accommodations should first register with the Disability Resource Center (352-392-8565, www.dso.ufl.edu/drc/) by providing appropriate documentation. Once registered, students will receive an accommodation letter which must be presented to the instructor when requesting accommodation. Students with disabilities should follow this procedure as early as possible in the semester.

Online Course Evaluation

Students are expected to provide feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing online evaluations at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu>. Evaluations are typically open during the last two or three weeks of the semester, but students will be given specific times when they are open. Summary results of these assessments are available to students at <https://evaluations.ufl.edu/results/>.